

The security of our Nation should be bigger than inside-the-Beltway partisan politics. We need to learn from the mistake of the past, stop talking about exit strategies, and keep talking about freedom, democracy, and victory.

DEMOCRATIC STRATEGY FOR IRAQ

(Mr. GINGREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the Democrats' plan for Iraq. Last week, following the Thanksgiving holiday, I spent a considerable amount of my time with constituents listening to their concerns and discussing a whole array of issues from gas prices, to the new prescription drug benefit, to the war in Iraq.

However, Mr. Speaker, some on the other side of the aisle used their time parading on comedy shows decrying the current operation in Iraq and scoring big laughs at the expense of our troops. I believe this further undermines the argument of those who would claim that an immediate withdrawal from Iraq is a noble course of action.

During her big debut on "Comedy Central," the minority leader bragged that "60 percent of the House Democrats voted against the war to begin with," and compared to other Democrats, were "way ahead of the issue."

I imagine that statement probably does not sit well with our troops in the field. And, Mr. Speaker, for the other 40 percent of my Democratic colleagues who might also take exception to this statement, I recommend that they discuss their concern with the minority leader.

IRAQI PROGRESS

(Mr. BURGESS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, during August of 2003, I was with a bipartisan CODEL in Iraq. We were in one of Saddam Hussein's old bunkers and had a briefing from members of the Coalition Provisional Authority. United States State Department, General Sanchez, was there. They outlined their plan for reconstituting the Government of Iraq and civil society in Iraq.

This plan involved selecting Iraqi citizens to form an interim constitution leading to the institution of a provisional government, which would then set the stage for selecting representatives to the Transitional National Assembly, who would write the final Iraqi constitution which, after ratification, would culminate with the election of the new Iraqi government. All but the last step have now been accomplished, basically adhering to the time line set up by the administration, the only deviation being a somewhat condensing

of the timeline at the request of cleric al-Sistani.

There is no question that there are those in the country of Iraq who feel they would be better served by continued chaos in the region. This is not the position of most of the people who live in the country of Iraq. The insurgency, the terrorists, hold no tactical advantage. They hold no territory. This is a fight that they know they cannot win on tactical grounds.

The only way for us to lose this fight is to lose our political will at home. Our soldiers have done everything which we have asked. Congress should not desert them now.

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PRESIDENT SETS TONE ON WAR IN IRAQ

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, some say the U.S. will not win in Iraq, but in the American political debate, we can do better than that.

Last week at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, the President of the United States did just that. President Bush delivered a forceful and effective defense of our strategy and the stakes facing our Nation in Iraq.

Along with thousands of other midshipmen, I had the privilege of joining the President that day, and I have to tell you, from inside the arena, it appeared that the President was both at ease and determined. He pounded the facts about enemy, their aims and our progress in Iraq into the American debate.

From the outset, the President set the tone defining the first war of the 21st Century with the declaration that the enemy must be defeated. He cited their war against humanity, while he released a recently declassified national strategy for victory, which Americans can read at WhiteHouse.gov.

For me, the central message came when the President said, "We will stay as long as necessary to complete the mission." This clarion call and the continued determination of the American people was timely and meaningful, and an important challenge to a Nation that believes in freedom and has always demonstrated throughout our history that when the mission is just and the mission is clear, Americans complete the mission.

SECURE BORDERS NOW

(Mr. PRICE of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, while home over the past 2 weeks, constituents kept asking me, when are we going to do something about illegal im-

migration? When are we going to take this problem seriously?

Congress should act now, and one thing is critically clear: Our borders must be secure. Before we do anything else, we must stop the flow of illegal immigrants, and this must be done now.

A hard deadline is important, a date after which we will tolerate no violation of the border, and that is exactly what H.R. 3693 does. It ought not be too much to ask to bring accountability to the prevention of illegal immigration.

For that is what it is all about, is it not? Accountability. Those who break our immigration laws should be held accountable. Those who hire illegal aliens should be held accountable. Those who turn the other way and claim there is no problem should be held accountable.

Mr. Speaker, we have a large and a growing crisis in our country. It is our responsibility to act on behalf of our constituents and our Nation. Simply put, if our borders are not secure, then our Nation is not secure. The time to act is now.

SUPPORTING HOPE FOR VISION

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Hope for Vision, a dynamic new organization dedicated to raising awareness of retinal degenerative and other blinding diseases, to providing information to help those coping with vision loss and to developing the tools required to support funding for research.

The organization was founded by my dear friends and constituents, the Lidski family. The premise of Hope for Vision is that the American people can help speed the pace of development of treatments so that those losing sight will see again.

Each of the tens of millions of afflicted individuals in our great country has a community of friends and families and colleagues. Hope for Vision seeks to reach those communities and to enlist their support for their mission of vision.

I urge my colleagues to join me in spreading the uplifting mission of Hope for Vision until sight is a reality for all.

PROGRESS IN IRAQ

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, while President Bush clearly outlined his strategy for victory in Iraq last week, soldiers of the Second Iraqi Army Brigade were finishing their first day of independently conducting military activities in Hillah, Iraq. After undergoing extensive training and testing by coalition forces,